

DISASTER MANAGEMENT



INTRODUCTION

DISASTERS:

- can be **natural** or **man-made**; **accidental** or **deliberate**
- usually occur with little, or **no warning**
- can have **devastating** effects on **life**, **property** and **economy**
- can be **short** or **prolonged**; a **one-of occurrence**, or **repetitive**
- it is better to **mitigate**, or reduce the risk of a disaster than to suffer the human and economic **consequences** of one

Disaster management systems cannot be effectively created **during** a disaster, and attempting to do so can have **catastrophic** consequences for the well-being of the country and the affected population. However, disasters **can be** effectively managed and controlled if proper disaster management systems are in place **PRIOR** to the disaster.

COMMUNICATIONS are the key to a successful response to, and management of, any disaster. A state-of-the-art, robust communications network, consisting of multi-layered, over-lapping systems with built-in redundancies and rapid response deployment options, is essential to ensure that communications are maintained before, during and after any disaster. Standard commercial national and international communications networks are invariably knocked out at the start of most disasters, thereby hindering, if not completely stymieing, the disaster response efforts. Hence it is critical to have a communications capability that can either withstand most disasters, and/or one that has a reserve capacity in a secure facility that can be immediately deployed in the event that first line communications are damaged or destroyed.

Another critical factor in designing and developing a National disaster management system is to ensure that meaningful **partnerships** are built at all levels of the process. Inputs must be obtained from all actual and potential **stakeholders** at all times, and most importantly during the initial **research and development** stages of any disaster management project.

It is critical to note that the most effective disaster management programs are those that have been designed and implemented as “country-specific” programs. There is NOT a standard disaster management program that can suit the needs of all countries/regions.

Of course this does not mean that National disaster management programs should be ‘stand-alone’ programs. Far from it! Disaster management programs must be flexible and expandable, and capable at some stage of absorbing the Regional and International relief assistance that is invariably forthcoming during emergencies. National disaster management programs must also be cognizant of Regional and International disaster management organisations, capabilities and protocols and National programs must cooperate with, and participate in, Regional and International disaster management initiatives at all levels.

THE VALUE PROPOSITION

Phoenix Group can provide the client with an internationally recognised disaster management specialist consultant to:

1. Conduct **detailed research** into the potential disaster scenarios that might affect a client as well as any **mitigation initiatives** that may reduce the identified risks
2. Conduct research into the **existing disaster management capabilities** within a client and make recommendations on the possible need to significantly augment those capabilities
3. **Investigate the need for**, and potential to establish:
 - a. a National (and Regional if applicable) Disaster Management **Institute** (including a Research and Development facility)
 - b. a Disaster Management **Operations Centre** with National, Regional and International command, control, coordination and communications capabilities
 - c. a National Warehousing, Procurement and Logistics network for effective disaster management **emergency response** (with possible redundancies for Regional and International assistance if so determined)
 - d. Implement set **protocols** for national and International disaster response
4. Partner with all relevant client **authorities** in the development of a **formal proposal** to establish a viable and cost-effective disaster management program for a client in line with points 1-3 above.

This proposition is unique in that it suggests considering combining training, research and strategic planning with operational capacity. It also moots a learning and information exchange across the MENA region and across the Islamic world.

The benefit in establishing an effective Disaster Management National program with possible International applications can be directly linked to the certainty of saved lives and reduced property damage during any disaster, but can also be viewed as an investment in extending a client's international reach and influence.